

162 the most numerous and ancient group, claim that their church was founded by St. Thomas. The Portuguese converted some of them by force to Roman Catholicism and also made many converts from the lowest Hindu castes. Christians are concentrated chiefly in Cochin and Travancore.

113 (3) For a fuller discussion of the meaning of this ceremony see Gough, "Female Initiation Rites on the Malabar Coast", forthcoming in J.R.A.I.

(4) E. Colson and M. Gluckman, Seven Tribes of British Central Africa (1951), p. 129. [102]

787 (5) Occasionally the astrologer may divine that
● 753 the spirit of a recent ancestress is causing sickness to women or children. An emergency propitiation of cooked food is then made to her in the ancestor-shrine.

769 (6) In a new house there may be no stool at all,
778 unless the house was built some time before the partition by a man who died before it became occupied by the new property-group, and who thus becomes its first karanavan-spirit. If there are no stools the members of the group go back to their parent-house for ancestral propitiations for one or two generations.

212 (7) Nayar women like men could traditionally read and write Malayalam, and keep accounts.

796 (8) Onam is a harvest-festival in September; Vishu the New Year's Day, in March; and Tiruvadhira, a women's festival to Kama Devan, the Hindu god of passion.

113 (9) Murdock, Social Structure, 1949, p. 10.

(10) From the Book of Duarte Barbosa, (Hakluyt

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Kathleen Gough

564 formal recognition that the bereaved lineage, freed from its death
765 pollution, had been received back into the normal social life of the
783 caste.

613 Lineage members were also united in worship of their lineage
goddess or *dharma devi* ("goddess of moral law"). This goddess,
776 named differently in different lineages, was a species of the common
794 Nayar goddess Bhagavadi. Her idol was housed in a small shrine near
the oldest ancestral house or sometimes in the courtyard of the village
temple. She was believed capable of inflicting or withholding sick-
[782] ness and all types of misfortune. To ward them off, members
propitiated her with offerings of cooked food every year. The astrol-
[588] oger might also advise an emergency propitiation. She had the power
[842] to bless women of the lineage with fertility. On this account she was
worshipped before a *tāli* rite and also at the first menstruation cere-
monies of a girl. In a somewhat vague sense, moreover, lineage mem-
bers appear to have felt themselves collectively responsible to the
goddess for sins or ritual lapses on the part of one of them. It was be-
lieved that if any member failed to observe the religious laws of
caste, to perform household duties correctly, or to revere the goddess,
[753] she might bring sickness or misfortune upon the lineage as a whole.
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613 In spite of this sense of collective moral responsibility, the evidence
is unclear as to whether the lineage as a whole was held legally
681 responsible for any of its member's acts. It is true that the enangar
564 were the legal representatives of the local caste unit in its relations
with the lineage. This inter-lineage relationship was hereditary and
obligatory. It could not be entered into or permanently broken with-
out the consent of the assembly and the chief of the district. If,
moreover, an individual infringed a religious law of the caste, it was
[692] the duty of his lineage's enangar to summon a caste assembly to judge
[823] and punish the offense. Crimes, which were also sins, against caste
law included incest within the lineage; dining or sex relations with
prohibited lower-caste persons; failure to perform the marriage rite
of a girl before she reached puberty; failure to observe pollution at
the birth or death of a lineage member or (on the part of an in-
dividual woman) during menstruation; failure to pay dues in kind
to the Nayar temple of the neighborhood. On being apprized of an
offense, the assembly's first recourse was temporarily to ostracize the
offender's household from the caste community. Ostracism meant
that the offenders might not enter the temple, bathe in public bathing
pools, enter the houses of other Nayars, employ the village servant

613 of the group, maintaining its accounts in her own hands and counsel-
592 ing the karanavan on his transactions with outsiders. When the oldest
woman was the karanavan's own or classificatory younger sister or
sister's daughter her role was unequivocally subordinate and a formal
division of duties was common.

613 *Rites of the Property Group* The property group jointly invited en-
592 angar households to the ceremonies of name giving, first rice feed-
796 ing, first menstruation, and death. The lineage as a whole held the
tali rite in its oldest house. However, expenses were divided between
the property groups and food was cooked separately in their homes.

613 Similarly, at a death the whole lineage observed pollution and at-
592 tended the cremation, the gathering of bones on the seventh day, and
764 the purification and feasting on the fifteenth and sixteenth days. But
men and women of the deceased's own property group offered cooked
rice to the spirit in their courtyard each day during the pollution pe-
riod. The rites of chief mourner were performed by the junior man
considered most closely related to the deceased—her eldest son in
the case of a woman, and the man immediately junior to him in the
property group in the case of a man.

613 The propitiation of cobra gods and of dead matrilineal forebears
592 also united the group's members. The cobra deities (*nāgas*) could
776 inflict or avert sickness in general but were especially believed re-
842 sponsible for the fertility or barrenness⁷ of taravād women. If a
782 woman failed to conceive, a performance was held at which men and
787 women of a wandering caste called Pulluvar played instruments and
153 sang songs to entice the cobras to appear. A group of women of the
taravād, who had purified themselves by sex continence and fasting
for several days, then became possessed by the snake gods. They per-
formed a wild dance, bowing and swaying in a circle and sweeping
their hair along the ground. In this condition they might speak with
the voices of the gods and announce whatever propitiations were nec-
essary to appease them. Sometimes one or more of the women fell
into a trance.

776 It seems reasonable to suppose that the snake gods were worshipped
842 as phallic symbols. They were definitely not regarded as the spirits of
dead matrilineal forebears, yet were capable of withholding fertility
or of causing women to conceive. Perhaps, therefore, they symbolized
the procreative powers of past genitors of the property group, who

⁷ Snake gods inflicted barrenness; the lineage goddess inflicted miscarriages and
sickness in childbirth.

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ners and morals of their caste. She might discipline them with slaps and scolding but was usually indulgent. She taught her children to look to her brother as their authority, and might either report their conduct to him or (more commonly) try to shield them from his correction. A woman's duties to her adult son were to assist in cooking for him, to serve him with food along with other men before she and other women had eaten, and to assist in care of the house. She should offer him counsel and comfort, respecting his wishes but attempting to dissuade him from wrong. Her own moral conduct in the village was a part of her duty to her children. If she infringed the religious laws her shame fell also on them and they were the most likely persons to be visited with supernatural vengeance. A woman should accept the suggestions of her adult son with regard to her conduct. If he became her karanavan she theoretically owed him obedience in law. 593 [861] [604]

A child should respect his mother's teaching, although strict obedience to her was not demanded before the age of five or six. Throughout her life he should revere her, remembering that he owed to her his membership of his taravād and all the birth-status rights of his caste. For her sake he should maintain right relations with his matrilineal kinsfolk, submitting to his male elders and protecting his sisters and their children. A man should protect his mother from slander or physical harm. When he entered the village after an absence he must go first to greet her. While he stayed there he should live in his natal house and make himself available to his mother's requests. He should not incur her jealousy by visiting a wife for long periods in the daytime, or by eating frequently in the house of a wife or of friends. In all things he should place his mother's comfort and the interests of the taravād above his private concerns. In her old age he must offer comfort and companionship to his mother and after death must perform funeral rites and make annual offerings on behalf of her soul. Neglect of the mother by an adult son was the height of impiety. The lineage goddess was believed to inflict sickness on an impious son. [626] [776] [753]

The etiquette of behavior between mother and adult son required mutual respect and a certain restraint on both sides. Each stood when the other entered the room, although they might later sit together and converse informally. They discussed questions of property and the affairs of the taravād in serious confidence, but undignified gossip and talk touching on sexual matters were prohibited between them. 593 576

Cults of the Dead Among the Nāyars

Traditionally, at the close of offerings to the ghosts, men of the *taravād* might become drunk with toddy and arrack. In this condition, one or more young men might undergo possession by one of the ghosts. He performed a frenzied dance and called out to the assembled members with the voice of the ghost, declaring its will and thanking or threatening the *taravād* on its behalf. I heard of only one *taravād* where this custom persisted. Shamanistic possession by the goddess Bhagavati or by the god Aiyappan is, however, still prevalent among rural Nāyars, and such religious possession is still more common among the lower castes.

In some *taravāds*, propitiation of lineage ghosts accompanies that of various deities associated with the *taravād*. Chief of these is the lineage's patron goddess (*dharma devī*). The goddess, though known by different names in different *taravāds*, is always thought of as a species of the generic goddess Bhagavati or Bhādrakālī, the chief deity of the Nāyars. Each group of Nāyar *taravāds* in a village usually possesses in common a temple dedicated to Bhādrakālī, but each *taravād* has, in addition, its own goddess. Cults of the village goddess are more important in Cochin, and of the *taravād* goddess, in Kottayam. The village goddess is believed capable of withholding or inflicting on the population wholesale misfortunes of a kind which strike all men alike—smallpox, cholera, flood, drought, cyclone, cattle epidemic, or defeat in an intervillage feud. Such inflictions result from failure to propitiate the goddess or failure to uphold the moral laws of caste. The *taravād* goddess concerns herself with its members' private morality and inflicts such individual misfortunes as fever, barrenness in women or cattle, or grave financial loss.

In aristocratic *taravāds*, the goddess and the lineage ghosts may nowadays be housed together in an ancient gynasium (*kalari*) near the ancestral house—a building formerly devoted to the military training of the *taravād's* youth. The ghosts may then be propitiated with cooked food on the same day on which a cock is sacrificed to the patron goddess. In such rites, propitiation of both spirits and goddess are associated with the *taravād's* former martial glory. In the rites there usually figure one or more ancestral swords which the male forebears used during their lives. These swords are the property of the goddess and are propitiated by the *kāranavan* as representatives of the deity.

Lineage ghosts have some concern with the *taravād's* internal morality. If its members fail in hospitality to guests, squander their income, or neglect their property, the ghosts may inflict misfortunes on one or more members of the group. However, failure to propitiate the ghosts correctly is the offence most likely to provoke retribution. Conversely, if offerings are made correctly to the ghosts, they will help to preserve the *taravād* from misfortune.

The ghosts vary in their severity and in the wrongs which they punish. A *kāranavan* who amassed much property is most likely to resent extravagance on the part of his successors. Forebears who died prematurely are more punitive than those who died peacefully in old age. All ghosts, however, are somewhat capricious: a small offense may provoke stern retribution, and misdemeanors on the part of one adult may result in the sickness of another or of a child of the property group. In particular, a forebear who was injured or insulted by his juniors during life or after his death may wreak vengeance on the *taravād* even down to the seventh or eighth generation. One instance from a village headman's lineage in Kottayam will illustrate such retribution. In 1798, the property group was dying out for lack of women, and the *kāranavan* adopted a woman and her children from a related segment of his lineage. After the

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613 *kāranavan*'s death, his adopted successor was too young to manage the property. This
782 passed temporarily into the management of a man from still another branch of the
597 same lineage. When the true claimant came of age he disputed his guardian's manage-
429 ment. After a bitter lawsuit the guardian was deposed in a British court. He continued
578 to live on the *taravād*'s land and to harass his young successor. When the guardian
753 died, the young *kāranavan* in his anger failed to arrange for the cremation rites until
several days had passed and the corpse had decomposed. The ghost of this proxy
kāranavan has harassed his successors ever since, causing many of them to die of
diabetes. The present members regard this condition as a decomposition of the body
during life. The ghost's anger is so great that propitiations do not wholly avert its
vengeance, although special offerings temporarily delay the progress of the disease.

769 The misfortunes inflicted by lineage ghosts include many forms of sickness, mental
613 disorder, female barrenness and miscarriages, all of which are attributed to actual
796 bodily possession by a ghost. Financial loss, crop failure and the deaths of babies or
753 cows may also result from the ghosts' displeasure. I could find no very clear distinction
761 between the misfortunes inflicted by lineage ghosts and those brought about by the
789 patron goddess, by malevolent alien ghosts, or by the witchcraft or sorcery of enemies.
Indeed it is obvious that the Nāyars themselves do not clearly restrict particular
misfortunes to particular agents. For on the occasion of a misfortune, the *kāranavan*
must often consult the village astrologer (*Kanisan*) who makes calculations to discover
the responsible agent. He then instructs the *kāranavan* how to carry out its propitiation
or to accomplish its control.

796 However, my information suggests that some misfortunes may be more likely to
769 be attributed to some agents than to others. Miscarriages, for example, seem to be
843 often attributed to ancestresses, to female alien ghosts, or to the patron goddess.
842 Barrenness is often attributed to the snake gods of the *taravād*, who are believed to
guard the fertility of its women. These misfortunes seem to be less often attributed
to male ghosts, although some instances are known. Perhaps most important, however,
circumstances immediately preceding the misfortune may help to determine the
agent. If a forebear has died recently, or if a *taravād* has failed to propitiate its lineage
ghosts or patron goddess, the *kāranavan* may not even trouble to consult the astrologer,
or the astrologer may merely corroborate his suspicions. Similarly, if a man has an
enemy with whom he has recently quarreled and then himself falls ill with fever, he
is like to assume that the enemy has engaged the services of a witch or sorcerer against
him. In small villages whose population is stable, moreover, the astrologer makes it
his business to know the affairs of his clients and thus to diagnose appropriate causes
for their misfortunes.

692 Sociological analysis. A satisfactory analysis of the functions of lineage ghosts
must take into account those of other supernatural agents and of secular authorities.
996 Among the Nāyars, supernatural agents have played only a minor role in punishing
784 offences against men, as distinct from those against themselves. This is undoubtedly
because human authorities of various kinds had strong judicial functions, deriving
from their incorporation in a kingdom. In the last analysis their authority was backed
by the military power of the king or chief. Among Nāyars, civil disputes were tried
by village headman or district chief. Certain major crimes against the kingdom's
683 religious laws were tried in the Raja's court. They included the killing of a cow or a
Brahman or fornication with lower caste persons. The killing or assault of a Nayar

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however intimately related to his children he may have been, he belongs to a different economic and legal corporation. In death as in life, he has no publicly supported authority over his children. Children do have a personalized relationship with their father's spirit in Kottayam, however, which is discussed below.

The emotional content of the relationships with lineage ghosts among the Nāyars does not depend upon the fact that they follow matrilineal descent, although of course the role-structure of the cult is determined by this fact. The Iravas¹³ of this area, who are tenant cultivators of lower rank than the Nāyars, have small patrilineal lineages and patrilocal extended families, cross-cut, traditionally, by dispersed exogamous matrilineal clans. The Irava patrilineage is called a *taravād* and is headed by its senior male member as *kāranavan*. The Iravas have a cult of dead patrilineal *kāranavans* almost identical in emotional and belief content with that of Nāyars. So also do the Coorgs, a patrilineal caste of the small province east of Kottayam, well described by Srinivas.¹⁴ The common form of the cult and the similarity of detail in this general area must undoubtedly be attributed to diffusion or to a common historical origin. Nevertheless, the question then arises of why this cult was not diffused to all castes of the southwest coast, notably to the Brahmans. Conversely, we may ask why the Brahmanical cult of ancestors, which is quite different in form and content, did not entirely replace the ancestral cults of the non-Brahman castes centuries ago—for these castes have been exposed to Brahmanical culture probably for two thousand years and have in fact adopted many elements of that culture. Moreover, cults of punitive ancestors similar to the Nāyar cult are very widespread in the world. It seems certain that whatever their historical origin, the reasons for the perpetuation of these cults must be sought in the role-structure of the kinship system and the emotional content of relationships with major figures of the senior generation within it. I would suggest that cults of predominantly punitive ancestors are likely to be accompanied by kinship relationships in which the senior generation retains control over the junior until late in life, but in which major figures of the senior generation are not highly idealized. It seems probable that the chief sanction against value-violating behavior will be fear of some tangible form of punishment, rather than fear over loss of love, and that although open expression of aggression toward disciplinary figures is controlled, the aggressive component in the ambivalent relationship to seniors will be strong and not deeply repressed. Among Nāyars and Iravas of my acquaintance, at all events, a man may even be conscious of his ambivalence toward seniors, and to the extent that he is not able fully to accept his own aggressive feelings he seems to project these in the belief that his superiors are even more punitive than they may really be. A portion of this projected aggression his culture encourages him to displace on the figures of lineage ghosts, who can inflict even more serious punishments than can living superiors. As is frequently the case in our own society, the mechanism of projection seems to be closely allied with that of introjection, which appears in the belief that sickness and mental derangement are caused by the entry of a hostile ghost into the body of the patient.

The nature of traditional Nāyar relationships to their lineage ghosts may be clarified by contrasting them with those of Brahmans. I choose for this purpose the Tamil Brahmans of Tanjore,¹⁵ with whom I am best acquainted. This caste of landowners and ritual specialists has patrilocal extended families and patrilineal lineages. Headship of the extended family does not, as among Iravas and Coorgs, pass down the line of

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769 No clear distinction is made between alien ghosts and minor malevolent deities,
776 or demons, which are also sometimes called *pretams* in Cochin. Some demons are found
[782] throughout Malabar. Chief of these is Kuttichāttan, a spirit capable of all kinds of
[564] poltergeist activities. Sometimes, on the advice of an astrologer, a *taravād* privately
173 sets up a shrine to Kuttichāttan and arranges for his annual propitiation by a low caste
769 person in the same manner as an alien ghost. Often, indeed, local myths of particular
776 Kuttichāttans suggest that they have been derived from alien ghosts, whose legends
782 became fancifully embroidered with miraculous elements. The story of one Kuttichāttan, in this case enshrined in a Nambūdiri Brahman garden and propitiated by a washerman, will illustrate this process. The god was said to have been born from a sacrificial fire during ancestral ceremonies in a Brahman house. The Brahman house-owner brought him up, and when he was adult sent him to graze cattle as a serf. One day the Brahman's red-horned bull was missing, and the serf admitted that he had killed and eaten it. The Brahman tied him to the rafters of the cowshed and had him beaten to the point of death. Afterwards, the serf turned into a Kuttichāttan and disappeared, but hovered above the Nambūdiri household bringing misfortune until a shrine was set up for him. Educated Nāyar informants surmised that the spirit had originally been that of an executed serf, later glorified by his propitiants as Kuttichāttan. Similarly, Kadangōtt Makkam, whose story was related above, is spoken of as a form of Bhagavadi in some *taravāds* where she is propitiated.

184 I have so far mentioned the kinds of alien ghosts which may be attached to individual
776 *taravāds* in Cochin. In fact, however, cults of spirits and deities of the village are
564 grander and more numerous in Cochin than are those of the *taravād*. This parallels
796 the fact that the Cochin village was traditionally highly centralized as a unit of local government. In this area, the temple of the village goddess Bhagavadi is managed
[794] either by a Nāyar village headman's lineage or collectively by a village community of
[613] commoner Nāyars. Only the Nāyars and castes above them might traditionally enter the temple, but all castes owed allegiance to the deity and took part in her annual festival. The lowest castes of former serfs, and some other polluting castes such as washermen, took part in the festival through the medium of one or more minor malevolent deities or particularly important local ghosts which occupied small shrines at a distance from the main temple. Such spirits were thought of as servants of the goddess, and at her will could "sow the seeds" of smallpox or other misfortunes in the village. To avert such misfortune not only must the Nāyars and other high castes propitiate the goddess herself, but the lower castes must also assemble, bringing imitation bullocks and horses—the vehicles of the deity's demon servants—and make offerings to these demons. Selected persons from these lower castes became possessed by the village ghosts or demons and, in masked dances, made oracular pronouncements both to their own and the higher castes. During the festival, and for several weeks before it, Nāyar households must also entertain these shamans privately in the court-yards of their houses and make gifts of grain to them which warded off the demons' wrath.

769 In Kottayam, the village was traditionally less centralized. Each Nāyar *taravād*
184 was an independent landowning body owing only tenuous allegiance to a chief. Cults
776 of deities and ghosts associated with particular *taravāds* are therefore more prominent
796 than are those of village temples, and it is in the former rather than the latter that
564 ritual cooperation between high and low castes is most prominent. Whereas a Cochin
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taravād may enshrine only one or two alien ghosts particularly associated with it, leaving the majority of local ghosts to be propitiated at the central village temple. A wealthy Nāyar *taravād* in Kottayam builds shrines in its garden for six or eight alien ghosts and finances elaborate propitiations on their behalf. Such spirits are in Kottayam called *teyyams*. As in Cochin, the spirits are often the ghosts of Nāyar or low caste persons who died violent deaths—for example, girls who died violently before marriage, women excommunicated or executed for sexual offences, persons killed by lightning, servants executed by their masters, or warriors who died in battle. Usually, miraculous elements are interwoven into their legends. Sometimes, they become merged with common minor deities such as Vettakkorumagan, Kandhā-karanan, or some species of Bhagavadi. In a few cases, they have become associated with some episode from the puranic myths and their human origin is lost sight of. As in the village temple rites of Cochin, these ghosts in Kottayam are propitiated, on behalf of the Nāyar *taravād*, by selected persons from the lower castes. These are chiefly Vannans (washermen) and Malayans (exorcists).²² Annually, the propitiants assemble in the Nāyar courtyard and recite the myths of origin of their spirits. Later, they make and receive blood sacrifices to the spirits, and finally, while possessed by them, perform spectacular masked dances and declare the spirits' satisfaction to an assembled company of many castes. These festivals take place throughout the whole of several nights in the month of January to February and draw vast crowds from the surrounding neighborhood.²³

I have so far dealt with modes of propitiation of, and possession by, alien ghosts. In addition, both in Cochin and Kottayam, Nāyars believe that certain persons can, through appropriate rites and spells, gain private control over alien ghosts and minor deities and engage in witchcraft or sorcery through their power. In what I call witchcraft,²⁴ the individual uses the power of his patron spirit in order to take the form of a bull, dog, jackal, or other animal. In this form he touches his foe in the night, causing him to fall ill with fever, to become insane, or even to die. Witches always belong to one of the lowest castes of Parayans, Pulayans, Pānans or (in Kottayam) Malayans. They usually attack persons of Nāyar or other high caste whom they themselves hate. Occasionally, however, a normal person of any caste, even a Nāyar, may hire a witch to attack a personal enemy.

A sorcerer performs rites and recites spells to an alien ghost or minor deity over which he has control and causes it to pass magically into the body of an enemy, thus bringing about fever, miscarriages in women, insanity or death. Sorcerers can also bring about the deaths of cattle. Nāyars attribute sorcery chiefly to lower caste persons. For whereas the Nāyars predominantly worship Bhagavadi and certain Sanskrit deities, the castes below Nāyars specialize in the propitiation of evil ghosts and minor deities, and it is solely with these lower supernatural beings that witchcraft and sorcery are associated. Washermen, astrologers and umbrellamakers, who specialize in exorcising ghosts from the bodies of patients, are particularly suspected by Nāyars of themselves engaging in sorcery. Nāyars do, however, occasionally suspect Nāyars of other lineages, particularly affines with whom they have quarreled, of practicing sorcery or of hiring low caste witches or sorcerers to attack them.

Witchcraft does not usually require the diagnosis of an astrologer. A Nāyar of nervous disposition simply suspects that a low caste man has bewitched him if he falls ill after encountering an animal in the night. Sorcery is usually diagnosed by an

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deity. Besides these, there are innumerable private snake shrines, particularly in pious households.

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All diseases or misfortunes are due to the neglect of snakes. Leprosy, itches, sterility of women and deaths due to poison, are attributed to the anger of snake gods. The remedy for snake-bite lies in the propitiation of serpents through worship at the snake shrine. If no such shrine exists, then a diligent search is made and a 'snake stone' is dug up from the vicinity. Thereafter this accidental find of the snake stone is duly consecrated and worshipped, and all the erstwhile troubles are attributed to the inadvertent neglect of the sacred stone. The person dying of snake-bite is taboo, because his body is supposed to be occupied thereafter by the snake god, and it needs to be disposed of in a special manner with particular reverence and specific rituals.

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Among the Nayars of South India snake worship assumes unique importance. It is popularly believed that in early times a Pambakattu Nambutiri brahmin brought the serpents with him and left them in their present abode. He however promised to return one day but never did. Strangely enough, in Travancore, a Pambakattu Nambutiri family still resides and is not permitted to enter the Manarsalil temple for fear that the snakes might leave the area and follow the brahmin to his abode. In a special ceremony called *havu muttam* or the shifting of the snake shrines from one place to another in the compound of the house—if accidentally the shrine is awkwardly situated in a plot of land where construction is to begin—the Pambakattu Nambutiri is called specially to do the necessary shifting ceremony. He purifies the new area and transfers the shrine to the newly consecrated spot, to the accompaniment of sacred incantations. Thereafter there is feasting and the brahmin is paid money and is presented with a set of new clothes. This is in striking coincidence with the legend of origin, and lends credence to the story of the origin of snake worship, particularly in Manarsalil temple in Quilon, as being connected with Pambakattu Nambutiri brahmins.

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The plans of snake shrines have much in common, though some are small and some big. The Manarsalil temple

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hoods are placed in the shrine, and no insect or rat or other animal is killed in the consecrated spot. Even broken bits of snake images are worshipped and they are set up in a row. No image or snake-stone is permitted to fall down, as that is considered to be inauspicious. On the inner surface of the hood of the snake is carved a seated female figure.

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These sacred snakes are supposed to be different from the ordinary serpents. They are given the status of benign family deities and are presumed to possess strange powers and the attribute of gods. They are revered and they deign to live only under ceremonially pure conditions and surroundings,

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accepting only vegetarian offerings and abhorring animal sacrifice. In contrast mention may be made of the Thlen of the Khasis which demands human blood as offering. In the event

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however of their abode being polluted, e. g., by a menstruating woman, the serpents are angered, and unless propitiated may cause disease or harm to the offender. The sacred serpent

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called *sarpam* is supposed to be small, about 6 to 18 inches in length and is golden in colour. It is highly poisonous

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but ordinarily does not do any harm. If properly propitiated it guards the family and brings good luck and prosperity ;

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but if neglected, insulted, or otherwise uncared for, it causes skin disease, leprosy or loss of sight. Such a punishment

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is visited on the offender or on his near relatives. As a consequence certain taboos are attached to the shrines and no

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menstruating or pregnant woman may come within six yards of the shrine, nor should anyone enter it without taking

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a bath.

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The actual worship or *pūja* is conducted either once or twice a year. The priest cooks rice in milk and adds pieces of ripe plantain to it, with a few flowering heads of the sacred *tulsi* plant dropped in towards the end. The offering is cooked on a special oven near the *sarpa havu* in a bell-metal vessel. Thereafter, the priest pours some water over the snake idols to ceremonially bathe them and places a bunch of areca-nut palm in efflorescence on the head of the image in a diagonal fashion. The idol is then anointed with turmeric powder and basil leaves and flower petals are

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[564] please the serpent god and to flatter him so that he may bear the welfare of the host in mind, and guard the family against disease, misfortune and harm accruing from human or super-natural agencies.

There are three important ceremonies in connection with serpent worship called *sarpa yaga*, *sarpa tulal* and *sarpa preeti*. They are conducted either at home or in the temple, usually on Sundays, since it is held that the serpents are most powerful and lenient on that day and are in a benign mood for granting favours.

[791] *Sarpa preeti* is conducted in the house whenever misfortune occurs. The astrologer is consulted who decrees that a curse is upon the house and the serpents are angry. Thereupon elaborate worship is conducted with much ritual, and propitiation of the angered deities is effected and normalcy returns.

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755 *Sarpa tulal* is a form of divine cure of the afflicted. The unfortunate victims of leprosy, mental or other diseases gather to worship the serpent gods praying for a cure. The priest conducts the worship and the afflicted go into a trance-like state and dance in religious fervour. Thereafter the priest throws consecrated turmeric powder on their heads and faces. The devotee feels blessed and cures are believed to occur.

796 *Sarpa yaga* is an annual festival in which many families jointly contribute to hold the ceremony. It is held usually for the collective prosperity of the village and lasts for two or three days. The afflicted and diseased persons dance in a trance for a long time and are given coco-nut water by the priest. At the end of the *puya* the priest sprinkles turmeric powder over the heads of the devotees and pours out holy water thrice in the palm of their hands.

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796 One of the special attributes of snakes is their power over disease. The snake deities are specifically impo-
tuned for the prevention of skin diseases, stomach disorders, mental disturbances and for sterility. *Leucoderma* and leprosy are specially regarded as due to the curse of snakes who might have been angered by some unwitting disrespect shown towards them, or by accidental misdemeanour on the part of the inadvertant devotee. Of particular impor-

length was 5 cm. or over. In one individual the iliac bone was much higher at the right side than on the left. ¹⁴¹564*

Face.—A few individuals were noted thus—

(1) Deep nasal notch. Nasal point slightly elevated. Helix of ear very thin; the Darwin's point in the centre of the curve on the left and high up on the right.

(2) Deep nasal notch. Chin receding. Lips thick.

(3) Slight nasal notch. Supraciliary arches developed at outer edges. Chin recedes.

(4) Supraciliary arches and glabella in one marked ridge. Nasal point somewhat raised. Nasal notch.

(5) Very deep nasal notch. Very wide and thick eyebrows.

Figure.—More than half are marked as slight—a few of them "very slight"; the rest "medium." None "stout."

Hair.—As a rule, to which exceptions are very few, ¹⁴²564* hair on the head is thick and wavy: curly in the case of one individual. The hair of a man of 70 was noted as "very thin and grey." A man of 31 also had hair which was "thin and grey," but he was exceptional. The growth of hair on the cheeks—whiskers—was observed in almost every subject.

Hair on the chest.—The average is "moderate."

On the arms.—The growth of hair in half of the subjects was "slight to very slight"; in the other half, "moderate to thick."

On the legs.—It was noted as "moderate" to "thick" in more than three-fourths of those examined; in a few, "slight."

The growth of hair of a few individuals is here specified—

(1) Aged 54. Hair on the head moderately thick and grey. Hair on the face white. Growth of hair on the cheeks. Hair all over chest grey. Very long thick hair on the back. Hair on the legs and arms thick.

(2) Aged 36. Hair on the head moderately thick and wavy. Glossy black. On chest and middle line of abdomen, moderate. On the arms and legs moderately thick. Shaves the head (except the crown), face, chest, abdomen, wrists and hands, about every 15 days. [302]

(3) Aged 28. Hair on the head thick and wavy. Growth of hair on cheeks; on the chin it is very thick. On the chest, moderate; on the arms, very slight; on the legs, thick. Does not shave his chest, as doing so would make him weak; on the other hand, if he does not shave his head and face, he will become sick. [302] [753] [826]

776 the necessary solemn ceremonials. Sandalwood is the fuel used
 825 sometimes. A small pit is dug which is covered with sandalwood
 825 pieces and they are set fire to. When the flame burns intensely
 the body is quietly placed in it, and reduced to ashes together
 with, in some cases, incense and myrrh. This is believed to
 mitigate the dangers consequent on the death of the serpent.

776 "The popular conception of the family cobra is that it is a
 825 tiny little thing with a full developed hood, and fangs, and possess-
 ing a golden tinge; which shine brilliantly in the rays of the sun.
 At the sight of human beings it gets away to its holy shrine
 exhibiting a reeling motion on its way thither. It never gets far
 away from its abode of which it is the perennial guardian.

564 "One striking phase of serpent worship in Malabar relates
 776 to the family of Pappanmakkat Nambudris and the singular
 825 and effective control they exercise over serpents in general. Their
 powers are handed from father to son. It is said that this
 Nambudri household is full of cobras which find their abode in
 every nook and corner of it. The inmates can scarcely move
 about without placing their feet upon any one of these serpents.
 Owing to the magic influence of the family the serpents cannot
 and will not injure them. The serpents are said to be always at
 the beck and call of the members of this Nambudri family and
 render unquestioned obedience to their commands. They watch
 and protect the interests of the family in the most jealous spirit.
 In short, these reptiles live, move, and have their being as freely
 as if they were domesticated animals imbued with supernatural
 powers.

[755] "Cases of cobra-poison are generally taken to this Brahman
 family and the headman sometimes summons before him the
 identical animal which caused injury and it is said successfully
 effects a cure as if by some mystic and magic influence.

825 "The serpent also plays a conspicuous part in contracts
 425 between citizens. The family serpent is in old deeds the
 776 subject-matter of sale. The sale of a house compound extends
 also to the family serpent. The stipulation in these documents
 invariably is that the family serpents are sold along with the
 properties; and even in cases of division of family property
 amongst its several branches of members, the family-serpent is
 included in the division. Such is the sacred prominence
 which has been given to the serpent amongst us. Their anger
 [753] is said to manifest itself in some member of the family being
 [982] struck down with leprosy or some other loathsome disease; while
 by their propitiation they can be converted into the guardian
 angels of our households, powerful enough to preserve the pros-
 perity of the inmates as well as to vouchsafe their complete
 immunity from the attacks of virulent diseases and sometimes
 even from death."

Pârvati kê kannêru dôsam undâi Sri Paramêšvaran Sri 755
Pârvati ute kannêru dôsem Tirtâtu pôlê Tirupôka Svâmi 539
en guruvînâna."

(I prostrate myself to Bhagavati. When Sri Paramesvaran and Sri Parvati went hunting, Sri Parvati was under the influence of the evil eye; Sri Paramêšvaran then put away this influence. I swear by my guru.)

(2) "Ôm Pêpûti Vôrrûpôti Yerrikâ Swâhâ Yên Guru Vinâna."

The meaning of this is not clear. "Ôm"=I. "Yerrika"=burnt. "Swâhâ" (used as a verb)=devour. "Guru Vinâna"=by the guru or teacher. But in mantrams the word guru invariably means the deity.

Mantram (1) is whispered on sixteen grains of rice: 755
on each grain separately, not on all together. As the mantram is whispered on each grain, the grain is placed in oil. When the sixteen grains have been placed thus in the oil, it is stirred while the mantram (2) is repeated sixteen times. The magician then hands this oil in silence to the person who has been injured by the evil eye. The person receives it also in silence, and rubs it over his head. No word is spoken until he has finished.

Fear of harm from the evil eye is very general. At 754
the corner of the upper story of almost every Nayar house 789
near a road or path is suspended some object, often a doll-like hideous figure, on which may rest the eye of the passer by. And of course in every field some object is erected for the same purpose.

Magic such as is practised by the Malayan, or the Panikkar, is quite fair and above-board. It is, as a rule, all for good: never for harm. Nearly every misfortune, bodily ill or ailment, and even death is caused by some malignant spirit or through its agency, and the warlock has business everywhere relieving people from their oppression. I feel perfectly safe in saying that every Nayar believes in magic through and through. No matter what his collegiate course has been, no matter how full of knowledge such as the West can give him, no matter how thrilled he may be by the higher Hinduism which condemns it altogether, he believes in magic as the cause of ills, and he believes in magic for removal of these. It is the last resource always, and the most powerful means in the hands of man. What are medicines, what is all our western science compared to it! The Nayar will not, I trust, be offended by these remarks, which after all mean nothing more than that he

Nayar

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588 marriage rite. At the auspicious time, each girl was led in turn by her brother from the house
 [564] and seated on the plank. At a sign from the astrologer, the Brahman priest (called Elayad,
 [793] a low sub-caste of Nambūdiria who officiate at Nayar funerals) handed the *tali* to the bride-
 588 groom, who tied it round the girl's neck. The nineteen couples were then secluded in the house
 833 for the remaining three days and nights of the rites. Informants said that in modern times
 178 when lineages were often large, the couples numerous and the girls sometimes infants, cohabitation
 would be unlikely. It was not, however, forbidden, and appears formerly to have been
 required. It is clear that the rite was ritually if not actually a defecation ceremony, as is
 indicated by the saying *Tali kettis amma dxi* ('having had the *tali* tied, a girl becomes a
 [married] woman').

588 Next morning the party reassembled without the couples, and offerings to Bhagavadi
 782 took place. The participants were a Sūdra Nayar oracle (*velichchappāḍ*), a Vattekad (oil-monger)
 787 Nayar sacrificial priest, and a Nayar boy who accompanied the oracle, carrying a staff to
 793 the top of which was tied a brush of coconut flowers. These officiants perform similarly by
 hereditary right at the annual Bhagavadi temple festival. The priest offered rice, paddy,
 coconuts, incense, a burning lamp, and toddy before the branch of the milk-tree, following
 which he sacrificed a cock and poured out a vessel of red blood-like liquid. The oracle then
 donned a waist-band and anklets of bells and took a sickle in his hand. (These symbolize the
 power of Bhagavadi: when he does them it is believed that she enters and possesses the oracle.)
 Accompanied by loud music, he leapt wildly in the air, shouting hoarsely and chopping
 his forehead with the sickle till blood flowed down. In this frenzy he called out to the host
Adranan that the goddess was appeared by his offerings. His possession then subsided and his
 insignia were removed.

796 Bhagavadi is the Malabar goddess of war, smallpox, and the soil. Her idol, in the Nayar
 [831] village temple, is a hollow cylindrical stone, a symbol of the vagina, as the Brahmanical idol
 of Siva is the lingam, a symbol of the phallus. Bhagavadi is also worshipped as the oracle's
 [753] sickle, as a picture drawn in chalks on the floor, as the milk-tree (*Alstonia scholaris*), and as the
 [782] ancestral sword of a Nayar lineage. She is believed to have protected the Nayars in war. She
 [834] is fierce and vengeful, her chief power being to inflict smallpox. She is propitiated by similar
 rites during smallpox epidemics, on the sixteenth day after a smallpox death, and on the last
 night of her annual temple festival, during which she is angry with the villagers who must
 observe sexual continence.

588 The remainder of the second day, and the third day, were devoted to feasting and music.
 [783] On the fourth morning each couple went to the village bathing pool where, hand-in-hand,
 [764] they took a purifying plunge-bath. Then, decked in fine clothes, they returned to the lineage
 house. In the kitchen each couple ate a meal from the same loaf. The company was then
 fed, but on this day, alone of all days, women ate before men. The bridegrooms received
 clothing and foodstuffs from the *Adranan* and departed for their respective homes.

588 In Palakkara the *tali*-tier might remain with his bride as her first *sambandham* lover. At
 184 the last *tali*-rite two of the nineteen bridegrooms remained in association with their brides,
 595 though one abandoned his shortly afterwards. The other seventeen girls formed unions with
 [765] other men of the village shortly after puberty. In all *tali*-rites in this area, however, the 'bride-
 [783] groom' remained the ritual husband of his 'bride' throughout his life, though he need never
 [851] visit her again. At his death, the 'wife', together with her children by whatever physiological
 father, must observe fifteen days' pollution. Death pollution was otherwise traditionally
 observed only for matrilineal kin: not until recently was it observed for the *sambandham* lover
 and the physiological father. The *tali*-tier of a woman was regarded, moreover, as the ritual
 father of her children. If they knew him, the children called this man *appan* (the Tamil word
 for 'father', used for the *genitor* by Tiyyars and Christians) as distinct from *ackkan* (originally

Dr. Marett himself has, with great truth, insisted on as the essence of religion.¹ I have called such practices magical, not only because they lack the emotional and the psychological elements of religion, but also because the fundamental presupposition in such performances is the power wielded by the magician, the "*orenda*" which he has acquired, over the ghosts.

This is very clear from the Nayar ideas of *Thēvar* and *Pisāchu*. *Thēvar* can be propitiated but never conquered; while a *Pisāchu* (or ghost), though superior to man in power, intelligence and will-to-do-harm, can be rendered harmless and kept under control by magical practices. The former conception is clearly Hindu and relates only to Hindu gods. The spiritual ideas of the Nayars themselves seem to be confined to ghosts, spirits, and to a comic elf called *Kutti-Chāṭṭan*.

Before we proceed to consider them, the position of the magician in the Nayar community has to be made clear. It is generally taken for granted by anthropological writers that wherever social life is regulated by magical practices the *Shaman* comes to be held in reverence. It is very interesting, therefore, to notice that the Nayars never accepted the superiority of the magician, and never accorded him any privilege. The magico-medicine man is, on the other hand, considered to be a sort of servant-in-attendance on a nobleman's family, something like a family doctor. The explanation that it is due to the warlike character of the Nayars is clearly inapplicable, as the magician attained kingly powers among the Masai, for example, whose society is also organised for purposes of war. The fact that the *Kāniyān* (or the magico-medicine-man) is not only not venerated, but actually considered an inferior, may be more due to the effect of caste-system, which places Nayars high among the social scale.

The *Kāniyān* is, of course, recognised as a necessary person. He gets from all the houses of the village settled remuneration, mostly in coco-nuts. He is not otherwise paid for ordinary consultation, and he is bound to attend to every case in the village without fail. For special exertions of his magical powers he has special payments settled by village custom. He has power, both inherited and acquired, to cast-off spirits, to perform preventive magic, and keep general control over ghosts.

There are supposed to be three kinds of spirits, *Prētam*, *Bhūtam*, and *Pisāchu*. A *Prētam* is the spirit of a dead man. The ghosts of men who died in the ordinary course of events are not really *Prētams*, because they do not wander about to overpower people and drink their blood. It is generally the ghosts of men who died as a result of foul play, or by accidents such as drowning, or by terrible diseases such as smallpox and cholera that wander about at nights. A *Bhūtam* is seen generally in marshy districts and does not always hurt people unless they go very near him. A *Pisāchu* is a general spirit of the air causing such diseases as smallpox. All these

¹ Threshold of Religion: Essays on Pre-animistic Religion, the Birth of Humility, and Its Tabu negative magic?

775 spirits can be seen. At night their mouth is full of fire of different colours, but it
[776] throws out no rays. That it throws out no rays is important because therein is supposed to lie the distinction between an ordinary light and the fire in the mouth of a spirit.

The *Prītam* is supposed to hover round its burial place or the place of its accident. Everyone is warned off such a place at night time. The hours during which these *Prītams* appear are between 9 in the evening and 3 in the morning. It must be [754] noticed here that the *Prītam* of a "black-magician," as distinct from a social magician like the *Kāniyān*, has more power to do mischief: it has more "*ovenda*," so to say. The man who practises black magic invariably dies a violent death, and his *Prītam* hovers round the scene of his former activities.

782 "Man dreads above everything else," says S. Reinach,¹ "illness and death, ● 753 punishments inflicted by the angry spirits with which his imagination peoples this world." This is absolutely true with regard to the Nāyars. Disease is generally [776] believed either to be the outcome of offending a god or due to the magic performance [754] of interested relations. Preventive sacrifice is very common, and every year all respectable Nāyar families perform some sort of propitiation ceremonies in the [787] village temple. If a whole village is ravaged by some epidemic, the villagers inquire into the matter through the astrologer, and if he finds, as he usually does, that it is due to the wrath of the village god or goddess, ceremonies of various kinds are at once undertaken and goats are offered as sacrifice, and sometimes a *Desavalathu*, a procession of the people with images, around the village is performed.

75 But such occurrences are rare. Only epidemics are put down to the wrath of 775 offended gods. Other diseases as well as misfortunes are put down to the influence of *Prītams*, bribed into action by jealous or covetous relatives. When any great misfortune, such as a succession of deaths, happens in a family, the first thing that is done is to consult the astrologer, who is sure that a ghost is working it under the influence of magic. His prescription is, of course, counter-magic, to be performed by himself. An offence to a god can easily be rectified if one does some elementary sacrifices, but the performance of counter-magic is neither so inexpensive nor so [754] easy. First of all one has to get rid of the evil already done. For that elaborate ceremonies may be necessary. Secondly, ceremonies to keep one immune from future attacks are essential. If it is any woman who is possessed of the devil, and 755 it is women who generally suffer from these things, an expensive and elaborate devil dance called *Kolam Thullal* has to be performed. For this the village has to be informed, and each family in the village is supposed to contribute something in kind to the expenses and take its share in the work. The ceremony is as follows:—

Preparations for the dance must begin a good many days beforehand. The *Kāniyān* of the village with twelve others of his people come to the house where the

¹ *Culte*, p. 37.

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[184] and dancing. This nightly routine of *pujas*, offerings, dancing, etc., is thus continued for the prescribed number of days.

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[776]

On the morning following the last day, the votaries purify themselves by a bath and fetch branches of *pala* trees, and a dancing procession is organised, which wends its way through the Nayar streets, accompanied by the Goddess manifested through her *Velichapad*, to the temple of the Goddess, and from there disperse to their respective houses before evening after singing songs of praise and thanks-giving in honour of the Goddess. A pit, 15 feet long, 5 feet broad and 3 feet deep, is then made and filled with ten to fifteen cart-loads of fuel which is burned and reduced to glowing red hot charcoal.

[787]

[789]

Here also is performed a *pūja*. At about 4 A. M., the *Velichapad* through whom the Goddess manifests herself, the priests, the votaries, and lastly the caste-men, all walk over the fire several times.

[782]

The day dawns and the senior member of the Porayattu family sitting on the stool consecrated to Bhagavati, and covering his head with the silk cloth of the deity, propitiates her with offerings of fruits, cocoanuts, and fowls. The whole ceremony is thus brought to an end. The object of this propitiation is to protect people from the attacks of cholera, small-pox, and other epidemics.

[753]

[789]

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Agricultural ceremonies.

Before closing this part of the subject, it may be noted that the agricultural year begins with the *Vinhu* (first of Medam, about the middle of April) at which

[787]

the hot weather is supposed to terminate. In families where the members pursue agriculture as a profession, they send for the local *Kaniyan* (astrologer), who estimates by astronomical calculations the agricultural prospects and the probable quantity of rain during the ensuing year. He is also asked to choose an auspicious day for ploughing, and on that day the master of the house goes to the seed-store with his Pulayan slaves and takes out a small quantity of each variety of seed, which he puts in a cup made of the leaves of the *kanniram* (*nux vomica*); he then places the cups in a basket near a lamp in the yard and places a small heap of rice around or near it. A new ploughshare fastened to a plough, and a pair of oxen are also brought, and these are painted with rice water. They are then taken in procession to the field, on reaching which the

[824]

$\frac{1}{2}$ [i.e., The Goddess Bhagavati -- An alyst]

773 thereon. The early colonists, on a second venture, finding
 778 the land occupied, commenced a war against the Nágas, but
 825 Parasurama acting as arbitrator, decided in favour of the
 [776] early colonists, and ordered that they should set apart a corner
 of every compound as an abode of the serpent gods. He further
 ordained that these allotted places were to remain virgin-
 ground, untouched by the blade of the knife or the prong of
 the fork, while the under-wood and the creepers were to be
 allowed to grow in wild profusion, and to such the name
 778 *kiru* (grove) was given. In it are generally planted several
 771 stone idols of serpents placed on a stone-basement called
 825 *chitrakudam*, the whole being held sacred and reserved by a
 low wall round it to prevent cattle or children straying into
 [782] that space. The propitiation of serpents is deemed essential
 to the prosperity and well-being of every house-holder, and
 [753] periodical offerings are made to them, while the neglect of
 [776] these is considered to cause leprosy, sterility, or ophthalmia,
 among the members of the family. These serpents are there-
 fore regarded as tutelary deities of the family, and the gods
 along with the shrines are conveyed with the property and
 frequently specified in deeds of transfer.

793 The high priest of the serpent cult is the Pámbu Mékkát
 795 Nambuthiri, who lives in a house full of cobras which are said
 778 to be harmless to his family. Whenever an image of a serpent
 825 from a grove has to be removed from one place to another, he
 [782] is sent for on the belief that he alone can do it after due propi-
 tiation and offerings, and any tree that is cut down for this
 removal must be sent to the local temple to be used as fuel.
 [564] The serpent grove should not be polluted by a member of the
 [841] low caste, or by a woman during her menses; and when it is
 [783] so polluted or otherwise spoiled, a member of the family of
 [787] the Nambuthiri priest has to be informed. He gazes into a
 vessel filled with oil, points out the evil and suggests the remedy.
 771 The ninth asterism in every month is specially selected for
 778 snake worship in Nayar families, when offerings of milk and
 825 water are made to them. It is said that the approach of a
 [841] woman during her menses will cause serpents to vacate the
 [782] grove because of the impurity, and Pulluvans are required to
 [532] sing songs and perform certain ceremonies to cause them to
 re-enter the shrines. Images of these serpents are sometimes

775 time. At the period of puberty and after child-birth women
 [881] are especially liable to the attacks of these aerial beings.
 [846] Charms and incantations, offerings and sacrifices, are the most
 [789] requisite to counteract the evils that demons do, and iron
 [782] rings, iron staffs, and leather shoes, are some of the specifics
 that help to keep the demons at a distance.

[787] They make their abode chiefly in the palmyra and *pála*
 trees, but some of them occupy even dwelling houses. Others
 take the shape of human beings, while yet others possess
 human beings.

775 Their name is legion, and they exist by the offerings of
 782 their votaries and their tormented victims. Against the machi-
 nations of these demons, the sorcerers and exorcists bring to
 [776] bear the influence of their special guardian deities who in turn
 [791] must be propitiated with offerings before they can be called
 upon to use their beneficial strength. In the case of the evil
 [783] spirit of him who has died an unnatural death, a Brahman
 magician purifies the spirit by means of certain ceremonies
 called *Tilahóma* (an offering of sesamum seeds to *agni* or fire).
 [789] A Chendus Nambuthiri presides at such ceremonies and trans-
 fers the spirit to an image of gold, silver, or wood which is
 afterwards placed in a Vishnu temple or enshrined in a small
 building put up for that purpose, there to rest in peace.

771 In the State, temples are dedicated to various demons,
 346 the chief among them being the Avanangáttil Cháttan in
 775 Triprayar. The temples dedicated to the small-pox demon
 correspond to the *Péy Kóvils* or devil temples of the Tamil
 [753] Districts. In these temples are to be found the instruments
 [796] and symbols of demon worship, the dancing sticks or wands,
 the priests' garments, tridents, etc., whilst in others there is
 nothing save the images of demons. There is also an officiat-
 [793] ing priest, who is the devil driver and the devil dancer, and
 [791] who at times even becomes a *Velichapád* inspired to communi-
 cate to the votaries, who consult him in times of illness and
 calamity, the wishes and intentions of that particular demon.

771 To a Hindu all organic life is sacred, and his creed is
 225 Worship of animals and plants. not to injure any living thing, while among
 the animals worshipped by him the cow occu-
 pies the first place. The cow is *Kámadhénu*, the giver of all
 things, and hence whenever a cow is approached, it is touched

CHAP. IV.]

The Nayars

87.

with the hand which is, in token of veneration, then raised to the head. Milk, curd, ghee, urine and dung are mixed together and used for purificatory ceremonies; and the images of gods are anointed with this holy mixture called *panchagavyam*. Small doses of it are even taken internally, and it is considered an antidote against poison, besides being prescribed as a *prdyaschit* or expiation for offences against caste, whereas the sprinkling of water mixed with dung removes sin or pollution from all persons, places, or things, and purifies them. The bull, the vehicle of Siva, is also held sacred, and a statue of it in granite is either placed in front of the image of Siva or in a separate shrine; and is worshipped as a God. The lizard associated with Siva, the monkey with Hanuman, the Garuda (the brahmany kite) with Vishnu, and the peacock of Subramania are a few of the other animals of Hindu veneration.

Of the birds of ill omen, one species of owl called *pullu* is much dreaded because of the belief that it causes an illness to children which results in emaciation. At the sound of its screeching, children are taken into a room to avoid its injurious gaze. Various are the propitiatory ceremonies performed by specialists to secure its good-will and to prevent its doing harm to babies; and amulets are worn by children as a preventive against its evil influences. Its hideous screeches are always associated with death.

Among trees, some are worshipped while others are used for *pujas* or sacrifices. Among the former may be mentioned the pipal (*Ficus religiosa*), a tree which is held in veneration by the Hindus. Persons afflicted with maladies or whose planets are unfavourable, go round a pipal tree, seven, twelve, forty-one, or one hundred and eight times, muttering prayers and burning camphor and other incense at its foot or perchance engage Brahmans to do so, in the belief, that it will cure disease or counteract evil influences. The *vilva* (*Egle marmelos*), whose leaf of triple form is supposed to represent the three eyes of Siva, and symbolise his triple function of production, destruction, and re-production, and the *tulsi* (*Ocymum sanctum*), which is sacred to Vishnu, are also worshipped. In front of every house, generally on the eastern side, or in the central yard of a quadrangular structure, is a stone or mud altar, on which *tulsi* or the *vilva* is planted and watered every day, and is worshipped by the inmates of the house. From

opprobrium at her house. The chief of the fisherman⁷⁹⁶ caste, styled Kūli Muttatta Arayan, has the privilege of⁷⁸⁸ being the first to begin the work of polluting the Bhoot¹⁸⁴ or shrine. Into other particulars it is unnecessary^[564] to enter. Cocks are slaughtered and sacrificed. The^[782] worshipper gets flowers only, and no holy water after paying his vows. Instead of water, he proceeds outside and drinks arrack or toddy, which an attendant Nāyar serves out. All castes are free to go, including Tiya^[564]rs and low caste people. The temple was originally only a Bhoot or holy tree with a platform. The image in the temple is said to have been introduced only of recent years. It is a pity Mr. Logan is so reticent. My information is that the headman of the Mukkuvans opens the festival by solemnly making a faecal deposit on the image. Here again there is the same strange union of everything that is filthy, abusive, foul and irreverent, with every mode of expressing the deepest religious feeling."

Of the cock festival at Cranganore, the following⁷⁹⁶ account is given by Mr. T. K. Gopal Panikkar* in his⁷⁷⁸ interesting little book on Malabar and its folk. "In⁷⁷⁶ the midst of its native charms is situated a temple dedicated to Kali, the goddess who presides over the infectious diseases, cholera and small-pox. She is a^[753] virgin goddess, whom no quantity of blood will satisfy. The temple is an old-fashioned one, presenting no striking architectural peculiarities. The priestly classes^[564] attached to it are not, as usual, Brāhmins, but a peculiar^[795] sect called Adigals, of whom there are but three families^[793] in the whole of Malabar. The Brāhmins are purposely excluded from participation in the poojah ceremonies,

* Malabar and its Folk, Madras, 1900.